



North Carolina Lieutenant Governor Mark Robinson

Written Testimony

Subcommittee on the Constitution, Civil Rights, and Civil Liberties
Hearing: *“Oversight of the Voting Rights Act: The Evolving Landscape of Voting Discrimination”*

Thank you Chairman Cohen and Ranking Member Johnson, and all of the members of the committee for allowing me to speak today.

I am honored to sit before this Committee and testify before the most consequential deliberative body in the world on such an important topic- a topic that hits close to home for me.

You see, I am the first black Lieutenant Governor of North Carolina, and I hail from Greensboro, home of the Woolworths Diner Sit-ins, an epicenter of the civil rights movement.

I grew up poor as the 9th of 10 children in a home marred by alcoholism and sustained by a mother’s faith in God. A woman who lived through Jim Crow, and witnessed first-hand the incredible sacrifices made to ensure that black generations to come would have a voice in government.

I know right now she is up in Heaven, very proud to see her son sitting here in this committee hearing. But today, I’m not here to talk about myself, I’m here to talk about voter discrimination, election integrity, and the role of the citizens and the government.

The title of this hearing is: “Oversight of the Voting Rights Act: The Evolving Landscape of Voting Discrimination” and it certainly has throughout our nation’s history.

My people were put in the belly of ships, bound by chains, and endured the middle passage. My people were whipped, beaten, and sold as property. In Reconstruction and throughout Jim Crow, black people were intimidated, harassed, and even killed to keep them from having a voice in government. Symbols like chains, nooses, and burnt crosses are not just symbols of death, they are symbols of forced and coerced silence.

The sacrifices of our ancestors so I could have the opportunity to become the first black lieutenant governor of my state, to see a black man sit in the White House, and for millions of us to be leaders in business, athletics, and culture is incredible.

Now today we hear comparisons of Georgia law compared to Jim Crow, that black voices are being silenced, and that black voices are being kept out.

How? By fear of a noose or chains? To be fired from work? To be ostracized by their communities? No. A free ID to vote. Let me say that again, a free ID to vote.

How absolutely preposterous. Am I to believe that black Americans who have overcome the atrocities of slavery, who were victorious in the civil rights movement, and who now sit in the highest levels of government cannot figure out how to get a free ID to vote?

That we need to be coddled by politicians because they don't think we can figure out how to make our voices heard? Are you kidding me!?

The notion that black people must be protected from a Free ID to vote is not just insane, it's insulting.

And let me tell you something. It has nothing to do with justice and everything to do with power.

Just a few days ago the Vice President went and visited the very place I mentioned earlier, the lunch counter in Woolworth's, to see the place where history was changed. You know who wasn't invited to be there with her? My good friend and Civil Rights Icon Clarence Henderson. The person whose picture is in history books, the person who actually sat in the chair and endured to make sure that black voices were heard.

You might ask why that is so and I will tell you plainly. The goal of some individuals in government is not to hear the voices of all black Americans, it is to hear the voices of those that fit their narrative, and ultimately that help keep one group in power.

And that's what this is all about, power.

Look at HR 1 that passed the House. It is despicable. The entire thing is designed to keep one party in power and to ensure that they stay there indefinitely.

How do they plan to do that? By taking away the rights of the states given by the constitution to hold elections, and to mandate a wish list by the federal government. Some of these items include using government dollars to fund campaigns in order to give an advantage to one party, mandating that felons are allowed to vote, including illegal immigrants on voter rolls, and of course, banning states from having voter ID.

The last thing I want to say is this. Many people know I am a proponent of the 2nd amendment, and I always will be. I believe that protecting the rights of law-abiding citizens to keep and bear arms is vital, and that the first line of defense for doing so is identification. In the same way, I believe that Voter ID is our first line of defense for protecting the integrity of our elections- and that's what this should be about, integrity, not power.